JOINT EVALUATION OF THE PARIS DECLARATION, PHASE 2

INCEPTION REPORT

MAY 2010
Contents

Introduction
  Purpose, objectives, audiences and approach for the Evaluation
  Purpose and Structure of the Inception Report

Process and building blocks
  Overall process: design, governance, direction and quality assurance
  Linkages study and approach paper
  Standard terminology
  Literature reviews and Country Dossiers
  Communications
  Joint development and two rounds of workshops
  Management of Country evaluations
  Donor/agency headquarters studies
  Targeted supplementary studies
  Other inputs
  Synthesis approach
  Quality assurance and dissemination strategy

Approach and Methods

Challenges, Risks, Limitations and Adjustments

Work Plan

Annex
Introduction

Purpose, objectives, audiences and approach for the Evaluation

The inception phase has confirmed the reasons for the Evaluation as set out in the Evaluation Framework (posted on the Evaluation Extranet site\(^1\)) as well as the objectives, audiences and stakeholders, and overall approach set out there. As will be seen below, the elaboration of the operational matrix and methodology for the Country Evaluations and further guidance for the Donor/Agency Headquarter studies has served to make the approach more specific, and set boundaries on the scope of the exercise.

Purpose and Structure of the Inception Report

The purpose of this Inception Report is for the Core Evaluation Team - having completed extensive exercises to gather information and build the approach, methodology and close working relationships with the key stakeholders and Teams – to provide a realistic work plan and methodology for completing the Evaluation. Endorsed by the International Reference Group (IRG), it provides the overall guidance for the individual evaluation and study teams.

The Inception Report also specifies the practical and conceptual challenges in executing the contract as laid out in the terms of reference. Solutions were recommended for consideration by the Evaluation Management Group at its meeting of May 12, 2010, following circulation and inputs by IRG members. The Management Group arrived at conclusions now reflected in the inception report as well as in the records of that meeting.

The meeting also reaffirmed the scope, context, governance and coordination of the overall evaluation and considered resourcing issues and made the adjustments required, for example to support further the evaluation capacity of some teams where necessary. This was also the stage to check the methodology in terms of coverage, scheduling, and to ensure that the data sources will be triangulated sufficiently to produce reliable evidence for the respective studies and ultimately the Synthesis.

Process and building blocks

Overall process: design, governance, direction and quality assurance

The overall process set out in the Evaluation Framework, and anticipated in the Approach Paper and Terms of Reference has been closely applied. The following sub-sections of this report on individual components point to salient developments and particularly to any course corrections made or proposed. The overarching design and arrangements for governance, direction and quality assurance remain in place, with some adjustments in the countries and/or individuals playing particular roles in governance and direction, as a consequence of changing responsibilities and demands in their own administrations.

It is clear that this multi-partner joint evaluation had to leave some latitude to accommodate different country situations and requirements (for example in the method of appointment and the roles of National Coordinators and Reference Groups) while also ensuring that common fundamental requirements and principles are respected. As Coordinators, Reference Groups and evaluation Team

\(^1\) This Extranet site is a critical innovation to manage communications flow and shared documents in this multi-partner international evaluation. Since the users of this inception report all have access to the Extranet site, the report does not annex supporting documents available on the Extranet site, but refers the reader there.
Leaders have come into place, it has been important to re-visit these issues and reiterate the central principles of governance, in the course of the two rounds of regional workshops.

Arrangements for quality assurance of the overall Evaluation have been proceeding as planned, with review at this inception stage being an important milestone, and the process has stressed the requirements for consistent and rigorous quality assurance provisions at the level of each evaluation or study, as well as on the work of the Core Evaluation Team. Each country team inception report will be reviewed by the relevant Country Reference Group, the Core Evaluation Team and the Evaluation Secretariat to ensure that these requirements are sufficiently provided for. The Core Evaluation Team will also be available to offer comments on draft inception reports and draft reports of Donor/Agency HQ studies.

The Core Evaluation Team Inception Report is expected to be followed up in the near future with further proposals by the Evaluation Management Group for the mandate and makeup of a set of independent reviewers to play a role at the stage of the draft synthesis report of the Evaluation.

**Phase 1**

The findings, conclusions and recommendations of the early Phase 1 evaluation have provided not only lessons on the process for managing this complex joint evaluation, but also important guidance on some key substantive hypotheses and gaps to be addressed, derived from the synthesis report of Phase 1. The Phase 1 experience also gave some important directions on the process and approaches to the analysis.

On process, there have been clear benefits in beginning earlier with the full involvement of a Core Evaluation Team in all the stages of stakeholder consultation, conception, design, coordination and implementation of the Evaluation. The highly consultative and participatory process in Phase 2, while extremely demanding on all stakeholders, has been considered essential to the integrity and ownership of this as a joint evaluation, while also laying the base for a clear common understanding and thus valid, comparable evaluation results.

**Linkages study and approach paper**

The “Linkages” study on “The Paris Declaration, aid effectiveness, and development effectiveness” launched during Phase 1, fed importantly into the advance consultations and preparatory steps for Phase 2 (notably in the intensive Auckland Workshop of the International Reference Group). The results of this study were also directly reflected in the Approach Paper for the Evaluation. These inputs, by providing expert coverage and analysis of a wide range of literature and methodological options, helped shape the Evaluation Framework and Generic Terms of Reference approved in December, 2009. Even as the extensive consultations proceeded through the two rounds of regional workshops and the development of the more detailed methodological guidance for teams, these formative documents have continued to provide useful checks and inputs to the ongoing work. For example, as the basic program theory of the Paris Declaration has been identified, the Approach Paper provided a useful suggestive list of the some of the possible “mechanisms of change” that might be expected to operate. The Core Team has verified that nine of the 13 suggestions are actually covered in the draft operational matrix and/or interview guide.

---

2 It should be noted that the Declaration itself referred only to very high level “mechanisms” which have been labeled as “intended drivers” in the Evaluation’s note on the Program Theory
Standard terminology

A trilingual glossary on agreed working definitions for key terms in the Evaluation has been prepared and made available to the participants in the Evaluation through the Extranet site. This has already proved valuable in avoiding the confusion and inconsistent treatment which can arise in this kind of project, impairing the progress and the comparative value of the exercise. This Glossary can be supplemented with new entries as required. Suggestions for additional entries are invited.

Literature reviews and Country Dossiers

The Core Team has reviewed the relevant methodological literature – benefitting from the Linkages Study and other inputs - and compiled a long list of references (in three languages) which has been posted on the Extranet. Literature lists for three core evaluation questions in the country evaluation matrix have been posted and digests are completed and in the process of being completed and posted. Customized templates for Country Dossiers for each country evaluation, including the key sources, were assembled and incorporated into each Dossier in readiness for sharing through the regional workshops. All these resources are intended to be live ones that can be supplemented with additional sources of value as they become available. Specific work with Francophone and Spanish-speaking teams to include valuable sources in French and Spanish has borne some fruit, although the main bulk of sources is in English.

Communications

The anticipated importance, and challenges, of maintaining the open internal communications systems needed to carry out this complex, multi-partner joint evaluation have been fully borne out by experience to this point. The decision to set up a customized knowledge-sharing system within and among teams - with essential benefits such as version control and “help” and “dialogue” functions - has been supported by substantial investment in the quality, accessibility, and usability of the dedicated Extranet site. Using such a platform requires considerable time and persistence because it depends on changed behavior, particularly for more senior participants who are sometimes less adapted to such tools. Nonetheless, because all recognize the dangers in the alternatives of scattered and confused communications channels, this system is gaining acceptance and use, as demonstrated in the preparations for the regional workshops on methodology. It still needs to be reiterated that this tool can only be effective if all stakeholders in the Evaluation use it actively, with timely and informative postings.

Internally, the planned trilingual operation of the Evaluation has generally worked well in meetings, while it has proved somewhat more challenging to ensure timely translation of key documents. There have been some short delays, but more difficulties in assuring accuracy and quality in translations of working documents, in part due to the specialized subject matter. Further steps are being taken to resolve these issues and to ensure that the quality is consistently high in the further stages of internal work and as the Evaluation products begin to go out to wider audiences.

Externally, it has been possible for the Core Evaluation Team and the Evaluation Secretariat in the course of visits for other work to date to provide a number of targeted pre-inception briefings on the Evaluation to interested audiences (particularly but not only staff of agencies and ministries concerned) and in a few instances to provide media interviews. In all cases there has been lively interest, good discussion and a number of useful suggestions and feedback on key issues from the perspective of both practitioners and samples of non-specialized but important potential audiences. The pilot work underway to test the potential of a film component for dissemination of the Evaluation is already sensitizing participants to the need to be able to communicate the relevance and importance of this process and its eventual results to wider attentive publics, using innovative means where possible.
The overall goal of ensuring wide dissemination and use of the evaluation has already influenced the process and products at each stage of the evaluation to date, by keeping the central questions and key audiences constantly in sight, and working to use straightforward language (minimizing acronyms, jargon and unnecessary technical language in all products). This has been important even within the networks of this Evaluation itself, and particularly in designing and testing materials for working with non-specialists, such as interview guides.

As the Evaluation Teams come into place and the whole process moves toward producing written reports, summaries and other materials (e.g. possible film) to disseminate Evaluation results, it will be critically important for all participants to apply these disciplines of clear communication, and to build in the extra time needed for peer exchanges, edits, and strong summaries. This underscores the critical importance of meeting deadlines for draft and final reports and dissemination summaries. In addition to a common outline for evaluation reports, an outline that the Synthesis report will also follow, a style guide for evaluation reports will also be provided in order to further enhance the quality, usability and comparability of these evaluation products.

**Joint development and two rounds of workshops**

As planned, the evaluation approach to date has been a fully joint one, where participating countries and agencies have been closely involved in all stages of the process, from developing the common and tailored elements of the Terms of Reference for the evaluations, and then amplifying them with more detailed methodological guidance. Given the primary reliance on the country evaluations in Phase 2, the coordinators, reference groups and teams involved in those evaluations have had and will continue to have a central role in the whole process. Particularly through the two rounds of regional workshops – only one round was originally projected - the evaluation has succeeded to date in being a collaborative and constructive exercise which values peer review and exchanges between the participating countries, agencies and teams, the International Reference and Management Groups and the Core Evaluation Team. There is wide agreement on the richness of the consultative input, shared commitment and strong ownership evident in individual evaluations, meshing very closely with the Generic ToRs. It is the firm intention to sustain this approach all the way through to dissemination and use of the final evaluation products.

**Management of Country evaluations**

To date the build up of country evaluations has proceeded broadly according to plan, although there have been substantial variations among countries with significant delays in many cases, and two countries (Cambodia and Senegal) running ahead of schedule. Two proposed country evaluation (in Kyrgyzstan and Sri Lanka) appear almost certain to be cancelled because of recent political change and uncertainty, and after considerable efforts to expand the number of country evaluations in Latin America have not borne fruit, with Bolivia being the only prospective companion to Colombia. (See also “other inputs” below for additional proposed coverage in Latin America.)

In a good number of countries, arrangements for designating and mandating National Evaluation Coordinators and Reference Groups were more time-consuming and complex than foreseen, and this delayed the start of contracting processes for Teams. Those contracting processes themselves then proved complex and drawn out in most cases, and there are also indications of shortages of the special expertise required among both national and international consultants. As of the revised deadline of March 31, very few country Team Leaders had been reported as contracted and 8 of 23 were in place and participating at the regional workshops for Team Leaders. In most other cases, the Coordinators report that contracting processes are now on track and should allow teams to be in place by the end of May.
Most National Coordinators and Reference Groups are now in place, with arrangements for their roles and relationships varying according to national systems. There is a clear understanding by all of the key responsibilities to support and protect the integrity and quality of the Evaluation processes and reports. The Reference Group has the task of reviewing, commenting, and noting differences if necessary in the Evaluation Team’s report, but not approving it, as the content remains the responsibility of the Team. The National Coordinator, as any evaluation manager, has the task of “signing off” the report as to its compliance with the terms of reference. Note: The draft outline for Country Reports in the Evaluation Framework is still expected to be valid.

**Donor/agency headquarters studies**

The donor/agency HQ studies for Phase 2 have also been proceeding at different paces, with two (Ireland and the US) reporting to be quite advanced in their work, others moving ahead with concrete steps and some still unclear. Further to refining the Generic ToRs in December 2009, the Core Team worked on identifying some important possible “mirror” questions from the country ToRs that might be usefully captured in Donor Studies. On 19 April the Core Team circulated draft proposals for a matrix further operationalizing the Generic ToRs, together with selected “mirror” questions. A few donor agency focal points have already provided feedback and confirmed that these refinements will be fed into the work underway by their Team. “Phase I” donors/agencies that wish to update their 2008 studies have been prompted to focus on three simple “up-date” questions that most donors are likely to have to answer for their own domestic accountability structures anyway. Two donors have already responded. Note: The draft outline for Donor/Agency HQ Reports in the Evaluation Framework is still expected to be valid.

**Targeted supplementary studies**

The agreed approach to commissioning possible supplementary studies in Phase 2 has been a cautious one, taking account of the costs, workload and need for very clear value-added from products that must be delivered in a timely way. The process for considering supplementary studies has been to ask any proponent for a concept note as a first step, and then for that note to be assessed by the Management Group to determine whether it merits recommendation to the International Reference Group. As a matter of transparency, the Core Team and Secretariat have reported on preliminary work on these topics.

At the outset one concept note was commissioned to a specialist on the issue of the impact of the Paris Declaration on the size and distribution of “transaction costs” in managing aid. After presentation to the Management Group and discussion in the first regional workshops, it was clear that the term was unfamiliar and/or mis-applied, and that the proposed study approach was unlikely to yield timely and relevant results. The proposal was not pursued, but the critically important issues around the costs and burdens of managing aid (and whether the PD has influenced their weight and who bears it) have been built in as major elements in the evaluation matrix.

Further to the IRG’s December agreement on the concept note and budget envelope for a supplementary study on “development resources beyond the reach of the Paris Declaration”, work has gone ahead with fleshing out ToRs, detailed budget and discussion on contracting arrangements with an optimal team, and the study is now underway. The ToRs and outline/inception report for the study has been posted on the Extranet site.

After a discussion in the Africa regional workshop in the Autumn, a concept note for a possible study on the Paris Declaration and social exclusion was prepared by Joakim Molander, with input from Florence Etta of the Core Team. At the author’s request it was discussed by the Core Team on 25-26 March. The Core Team recommended to the Management Group to hold off commissioning a special study in this area. The main reasoning included the problem, evident again in the Southeast Asia.
Team Leaders’ workshop, that the concept of “social exclusion” as such is not widely understood across the Evaluation countries and that the hypothesis of possible perverse impacts from the Paris Declaration needs further investigation (which can be appropriately done in the country evaluations.) Thus the original proponent agreed with the suggestion to incorporate and reinforce several key questions on these issues (capturing the concept in more familiar terms) in the draft operational matrix and interview guide for the Country Evaluations.

A Concept Note for a supplementary study on the challenges of Managing for Development Results was drafted by the Core Team and considered by the EMG on 12 May. The Management Group decided against recommending it to the IRG. It found that this topic, while important (as noted in Phase 1) would need to be covered alongside other key issues within the normal treatment in the Evaluation Matrix, rather than incurring the additional costs and workload of commissioning a supplementary study. The Core Evaluation Team was asked by the Management Group to deepen their enquiry on the MfDR issue through the literature review taking into account grey literature and other unpublished material such as the deliberations of the WP-EFF Cluster E which focuses on MfDR.

The Aid Industry Culture: A proposal for a study of the culture of the aid industry had surfaced at the regional workshop in Vietnam. While deemed very interesting, the Management Group found it outside the scope of this evaluation. Joakim Molander indicated that Sweden might consider taking up the idea outside the PD Evaluation at an appropriate time.

Other inputs

Following suggestions at the IRG meeting that approved the evaluation Framework and Generic Terms of Reference in December 2009, the Core Team has set up a systematic monitoring arrangement to ensure that all relevant activities taking place under the auspices of the DAC Working Party on Aid Effectiveness are taken into account as the Evaluation progresses. One specific input, provided in January 2010 by the Ugandan and German Task Team Leaders of the WP-EFF Cluster C Task Team “Division of Labour and Complementarity” is a paper on “Division of Labour among Donors – An Approach to Harmonisation.” In addition to confirming the broad directions of the evaluation questions in this area, the entire paper has been posted both on the Evaluation Extranet site and the DAC website, and drawn to the attention of participants in the regional methodology workshops for Team Leaders.

In view of the limited coverage of Latin American countries a special survey of experience in Latin American countries is being developed in collaboration with the Organization of American States. This will have the effect of providing wider Latin American coverage of at least some key questions -- is being treated as a type of special study integrated into the Core Team’s contractual arrangements. An initial implementation meeting was held on 13 May between the Core Team, the consultant and the OAS officials concerned. The discussion and follow-up confirmed the interest and roles of the three parties. The OAS will provide the use of its Cooperanet platform and focal points, as well as following up to ensure responses. The consultant team will be responsible for survey design, with substantive input and oversight from the Core Team, and for processing and reporting on results, as well as some help in following up. Because of the coincidence of the response period with summer holidays in survey countries, the results will be slightly delayed, but available at the latest. by mid-October, 2010 in parallel with the draft country evaluation reports and donor/agency studies. Further developments will be posted on the Extranet site.

Numerous other initiatives and reports are being brought to the attention of the Core Team by IRG members and other collaborators, supplementing the ongoing research of the Team itself, and being incorporated in the literature bank and applied as useful. Particular arrangements are being
considered to provide exchange, in late 2010 or early 2011, on this and a number of other relevant international evaluations underway.

**Synthesis approach**

The Terms of Reference of the Core Evaluation Team have as a major component the responsibility for the preparation of a free-standing Synthesis Report of the entire Evaluation. This report, given its nature and its intended uses and audiences, will be much more than a summary of the component country evaluations, donor/agency HQ studies and other building blocks of the Evaluation as outlined in the Evaluation Framework. It must indeed synthesize evaluation results from all these sources, and generate rigorous and policy-relevant findings, conclusions, possible lessons and recommendations. It must reach both specialized audiences (at policy and operational levels) and wider, non-specialized publics interested in an independent global assessment of the state of aid effectiveness and the results of efforts to improve it. A major platform, but not the only one, will be the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Korea in December 2011, but the synthesis report, often in combination with country evaluation reports and donor studies, will also have wide audiences and continuing uses in individual countries, both before and after Seoul.

Work to prepare the final synthesis report will have to begin before all country-level evaluations are complete, underlining the importance of careful time planning of country-level activities.

The process of drafting the Synthesis Report will need to be grounded systematically and demonstrably in the data, findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations of the Country Evaluations, the Donor/Agency HQ Studies and the other agreed inputs, refer to them and be able to account for the evidence on which it is based, without becoming a heavy, densely-footnoted document. It will be subject to the contractually-specified arrangements for internal quality assurance. As further quality assurance, it will also require working closely with country-level and donor/agency teams, as well as the governance structures and any designated external reviewers to ensure that the overall conclusions of the evaluation are adequately founded on evidence and fully meet the DAC Evaluation Quality Standards. There will be provision for the IRG in particular to finally review, comment and if necessary record differences, but the Core Evaluation Team will take final responsibility for the report.

Building on these foundations, the Synthesis report will add another level of analysis to draw out the more general trends, findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations arising around the implementation of the Paris Declaration and (to the extent possible) the Accra Agenda for Action, including the assessment of the program theory of the Declaration, and implications for the future improvement of aid effectiveness beyond the lifespan of the Declaration. The synthesis report will include an executive summary (which can itself be published as a free-standing summary of the Evaluation for appropriate purposes.) The final synthesis report will be held to the DAC Evaluation Quality Standards.

**Quality assurance and dissemination strategy**

Separate papers - pulling together and updating the quality assurance provisions in the Evaluation, and setting out a draft dissemination strategy - have been prepared by the Evaluation Secretariat in consultation with the Evaluation Management Group and the Core Evaluation Team. The quality assurance paper and the draft dissemination strategy were circulated in parallel with the draft inception report to the IRG and the papers and comments received were reviewed and integrated by the Management Group. These two papers are being finalised and will be posted by the Secretariat on the Extranet site for ease of reference.
Approach and Methods

An overall approach has been developed that recognizes the distinctive methodological challenges of evaluating the Paris Declaration. The evaluation is expected to provide answers to evaluation questions that are important to stakeholders and constituencies who can then use them to strengthen strategies and policies that will improve the effectiveness of aid and the achievement of development results. Cross-cutting issues and themes have been integrated throughout the evaluation matrix and supporting instruments in close consultation with recognized specialists. This applies particularly to the examination of the aspects of gender equality, human rights and social inclusion, which are prominent in the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda and the agreed Framework for the Evaluation.

An important new element introduced at the inception stage has been the explicit identification by the Core Team of the program theory of the Paris Declaration. During the inception phase, it has become clear that it will be helpful to the many different teams and stakeholders involved to have a very clear idea of not only the original intended outcomes of the Paris Declaration (already embedded by the Core Team in the Evaluation Framework, core question 2, and the draft matrices) but also the other links in the Paris Declaration’s program theory.

The “Notes on the theory of the Paris Declaration as a basis for the Evaluation.” (Annex B) were therefore also prepared, drawing directly from the Declaration itself, to further help ensure a shared understanding and orient the work of the teams in this evaluation. The two attached diagrams are very important. Diagram 1 should help all to track the Declaration’s own identification of the elements in its broad program logic and to see how the evaluation matrix follows it through. Diagram 2 drives home graphically the critical importance of context and enabling conditions, and the limits of the role and potential contributions of aid to achieving development results, given the magnitude and importance of many other more determinant drivers, actors, forces and events. It also underlines the non-linear pathways of possible contributions by aid, subject as they are to other powerful, and often unpredictable, forces at work. This Diagram further explains the major emphasis, and analytical approach to the examination of context in Core Question 1.

The notes on the program theory have been well received, and their circulation has also led to some useful insights, discussions and suggestions that the methodology should attempt to be more explicit about the underlying assumptions in the Declaration’s theory and the “mechanisms of change” that were expected to operate. At this stage, the methodology has stopped short of these leaps. The basis for this position is that the Declaration itself is largely silent on these points, which will also come into play at many levels, and it would be methodologically presumptuous to attempt to ascribe these aspects retro-actively and in the abstract. Following suggestions from IRG Members, the Management Group revisited the position on these issues with the Core Team on May 12, 2010. It noted and accepted as appropriate the clarification that nine of the 13 Approach Paper suggestions on “mechanisms of change” to explore are actually covered in the draft operational matrix and/or interview guide, and that the Declaration’s own statement of high level “mechanisms” has been included in the Evaluation’s note on the Program Theory, labeled as “intended drivers.” The Management Group also agreed that the emerging findings and conclusions from the individual evaluations and the synthesis should be expected to shed a great deal of light on the implicit assumptions and/or lack thereof in the Declaration, and thus also allow for some evaluation of the program theory itself.

Overall, a range of suitable methods for this evaluation (some specifically responding to the special difficulties of attribution, causality and contribution) were identified in the Evaluation Framework. Following the inception stage the following methods have been confirmed as being relevant, useful and feasible, and most are reflected in the multi-method approach outlined in the draft operational evaluation matrix (and its annexes) as the key addendum to this Inception Report. After discussion with the Management Group, it was agreed that the Evaluation should stop short of promising that the
full range of tools in consideration could necessarily be applied, given the continuing uncertainties about the capacities of Evaluation Teams yet to be contracted as well as the availability of reliable data

a) Syntheses and meta-analyses (in individual evaluations and the overall synthesis) of existing evidence (e.g. secondary sources), evaluations and research; using common specified parameters for their identification, inclusion and structured assessment;

b) The normal arsenal of evaluation tools and techniques, including literature and documentation review of multiple sources at country, regional and international level, review of existing statistical data, structured surveys and questionnaires for stakeholder groups, semi-structured key informant interviews and focus groups (including civil society and the private sector), and any other relevant additional analyses;

c) Given the methodological limitations around robustly exploring counterfactual logic for this evaluation object (through e.g. experimental / randomized-type methods), comparative questions will be incorporated, for example between Paris Declaration and non-Paris Declaration type policies (e.g. different aid modalities, global funds etc.). This will be especially relevant for core evaluation question 3. Other approaches will include: “backward tracking” to past Paris Declaration-like initiatives and their results so as to test effects over longer periods; (where data is available); the analysis of time-series data, and synthesis studies of existing research;

d) To enable the evaluation to generate more in-depth insights into the role and effects of the Paris Declaration, comparative “case studies” that address one common sector (health) and an additional priority sector (as identified by each country) are built into almost all the country evaluations, with a standard instrument for sectoral examinations. Important common cross-cutting themes relating to Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action commitments are also built into the matrix and supporting instruments

e) Theory based’ (longitudinal) studies that are forward looking (i.e. anticipate development results that are in formation but have not become fully evident) by mapping out the plausible links in the causal chain from aid to development results and measure as far as possible “direction of travel” and “distance travelled”. This is especially important for some of the longer term effects of the Paris Declaration that will not be evident by 2011;

f) Given the intentions of this evaluation to support improvements in policy and practice as well as document/measure achievements and failures, there will need to be a focus on mechanisms of change. This means identifying the nature and role of those causal factors that help explain results in context so as to be able to make credible recommendations. The major emphasis placed in this approach on an in-depth and analytical examination of the context for implementation of the Paris Declaration is designed to ensure a high degree of realism in assessing the potential and actual, for implementing the Declaration, and achieving its intended effects.

Challenges, Risks, Limitations and Adjustments

The extraordinary challenges, risks, and limitations intrinsic to this Evaluation were recognized from the outset and set out in the Evaluation Framework. These lie particularly in the unusual character of a political declaration as an object of evaluation, the breadth and complexity of coverage in the Evaluation, the extreme difficulties of tracing causality, attribution and contribution, and the complex, multi-partner coordination and orchestration required. These factors have been systematically taken
into account in the work to date, as reflected in the guidance documents, draft operational matrix and supporting materials.

During the Inception Phase, the following further important challenges/risks have emerged and call for adjustments/mitigation measures. Both are briefly outlined below.

1. **Challenge/risk**: The expectation of breadth and comprehensiveness needing to be balanced with rigor and depth: the draft operational matrix and supporting interview guide are unavoidably long and demanding in order to cover the Declaration. Relatedly, the Evaluation needs to take account of the realistic scope available in evaluation budgets and probable range of different capacities among teams.

   **Proposed adjustment/ Mitigation measure**: Focus and prioritization. The Management Group and Core Team considered the possibility of highlighting in the operational matrix certain minimum “must cover” aspects and related indicators, as a way of ensuring that all evaluations will meet a basic threshold for inclusion among the completed products and for reflection in the Synthesis report. It was concluded that all the agreed evaluation questions and sub-questions need to be treated, but that the proposals for using multiple indicators for each should be tempered by a pragmatic approach to avoid expending excessive time in searching out inaccessible data. It was also agreed to specifically ask all National Coordinators (with the support of their respective Reference Groups) to assemble at the outset a set of basic official documents and data for the Country Dossier (to be indicated by the Core Team) that would enable the Country Teams to get a rapid start and avoid unnecessary search time. These points are being reflected in the revised operational matrix.

2. **Challenge/risk**: Timing failures. The uneven timing and thus difficulty in synchronization of different evaluations and studies. Some are ahead of schedule and thus not able to integrate the full common methodology still to be approved, while others, as noted, are behind, with the risk of not delivering a satisfactory product on time.

   **Proposed adjustment/ Mitigation measure**: Special catch-up support: The Core Evaluation Team will provide additional assistance first to those evaluation teams not yet named as soon as they come on board. Possible means would include: bilateral video-conferences, sub-regional meetings, and bilateral assistance missions. Each of these options has different resource implications that will need to be considered. There may also be some potential in more structured peer support among nearby country teams, although each potential “mentor” team will also have its own constraints. It is also proposed that “front-runner” teams should also be offered assistance in order to bring on board essential elements that they may have missed. It is worth noting that two such teams have already indicated that they will integrate new elements in their work already underway, or may double back after they have met an important milestone for a first report.

   **Proposed adjustment/ Mitigation measure 2**: Reiterating firm deadlines. It will be important to underline the fixed end point of the schedule for this Evaluation, and the fact that late reports will not be included with the others submitted or taken into account in the Synthesis report.

3. **Challenge/ risk**: Excessive defensiveness around the evaluation findings. Given the nature and profile of the issues and actors involved, this must be considered a risk with both high likelihood and high importance

   **Proposed mitigation measures**: The full gamut of quality assurance measures specified at all levels – which need to be strictly applied throughout, and thus to reinforce each other – provide the best available assurance that this risk can be contained.
4. Challenge/ risk: Erroneous or unrealistic expectations of the Evaluation’s results. This has rightly been raised as an issue relating both to the substance of the Evaluation and the communication of its results.

Proposed mitigation measures: Some measures from the outset are the careful specification of the Evaluation’s coverage and emphasis, with its extraordinary stress on the importance of context and particular caution about not seeking more than plausible contributions of PD changes to development results, via aid effectiveness changes. This will be reflected in the communication of ultimate results, where it is already clear that the Evaluation should be able to educate many, both about keeping aid in its proper perspective, and assessing concrete steps to improve the effectiveness of aid against established shortcomings.

5. Challenge/ risk: The danger of limited intersections between country evaluations and donor/ agency HQ studies:

Proposed adjustment: The measures proposed to Coordinators of Phase 2 studies and potential Phase 1 updaters would greatly aid in generating valuable complementarities and opportunities for triangulation, and thus greatly enrich the overall Evaluation product. At the same time, the quite different terms of reference in the Phase 2 country evaluations will inevitably still limit this potential. One further contribution will be for the Core Team to extract and circulate some significant findings from the phase 1 donor studies as an aid to Country Teams in pursuing key questions in their work.

Work Plan

At the end of the Inception period, the work plan and timetable set out in the Evaluation Framework remain basically intact (see below). There have been minor adjustments, for example in the timing of regional workshops, and more may occur as the Evaluation Management Group and the Core Team work through the possible consequences of the emerging challenges and risks noted above. One further limited stream of work proposed is to ensure monitoring and reflection on the complex and innovative process of this joint evaluation itself.
## Critical Milestones

**Updated 13 May 2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period/Date</th>
<th>In country and donor/agency HQ</th>
<th>Core Evaluation Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Dec 2009</td>
<td>IRG endorsement of Evaluation Framework and Generic Terms of Reference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2009/Jan 2010</td>
<td>Establish National Reference Groups and approve TORs for Country Evaluations/Donor HQ Studies</td>
<td>Core Evaluation Team support to National Evaluation Coordinators as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2009/Mar 2010</td>
<td>Select and contract evaluation Teams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb - Mar</td>
<td>Core Team mission to coordinate with advanced Cambodian evaluation and early South Pacific workshop for Team Leaders and National Coordinators with Core Team/EMG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 March</td>
<td>Core Evaluation Team circulates draft operational matrix including methodology paper/package to workshop participants and to IRG/EMG for comments by 9 April. (Participants in the sub-regional workshops will, of course have the opportunity to comment and discuss this at the workshops).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Sub-regional/national workshops for Team Leaders and National Coordinators with Core Team/EMG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 April</td>
<td>Core Team submits Inception Report including revised operational Matrix including methodology paper/package to IRG for comments by 10 May (noting that input from the delayed SEA and LA workshops will still need to be taken into account.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 13 May</td>
<td>Core Team and EMG meet to finalise Inception Report and operational Matrix including methodology paper/package</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 May</td>
<td>Country and Donor/Agency HQ Teams submit inception reports</td>
<td>Core Evaluation Team support to National Evaluation Coordinators as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April – Oct</td>
<td>Conducting Country and donor/agency headquarters-level evaluations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Oct</td>
<td>Submission of first draft report including summary of findings by each country team and donor/agency headquarters-level team to EMG and CET</td>
<td>Core team prepares consolidated emerging findings by 15 Nov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct – Dec</td>
<td>Consultation, validation and finalisation of reports in countries and donor/agency HQ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - 10 Dec</td>
<td>Meeting/workshop of country and donor/agency headquarters study team leaders, Core Team and International Reference Group to discuss emerging findings and the plan for the synthesis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Dec</td>
<td>Submission of country and donor/agency-level reports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period/Date</td>
<td>In country and donor/agency HQ</td>
<td>Core Evaluation Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2011</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan – Apr</td>
<td>Dissemination of evaluation results in countries</td>
<td>Drafting Synthesis Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Meeting of the International Reference Group to comment on the draft Synthesis Report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April - May</td>
<td>Dissemination of evaluation results in countries</td>
<td>Finalisation of Synthesis Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May – Sep</td>
<td>Dissemination activities/inputs to preparations for High Level Forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Nov -1 Dec</td>
<td></td>
<td>4th High Level Forum in Korea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes on the theory of the Paris Declaration as a basis for the Evaluation
(With amplified Diagram B)

Purpose
As the Evaluation of the Paris Declaration has been taking shape, different strands have been coming together from past thinking and preparation for the main work of the many component evaluations. The preparation has been focused on an agreed evaluation framework and draft generic terms of reference. During the continuing process it has become clear that it will be helpful to the many different teams involved to have a very clear idea of not only the original intended outcomes of the Paris Declaration (already embedded in the agreed guiding documents and draft matrices) but also the other links in the Declaration’s program theory. This note should therefore further help ensure a shared understanding and orient the work of the teams in this evaluation.

Background
The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness is a high-level and wide-ranging set of political commitments to achieving broadly-agreed goals, working through many different relationships. It is therefore difficult to envisage a hard and fast “program theory” or “theory of change” that could have guided such a complex set of interventions, or could now provide a tight basis for a theory-based evaluation. However, a closer examination of the Declaration itself shows that it does contain a basic, but quite explicit “program theory”, which can and should be used at least in part to guide the Evaluation.3

What the Declaration sets out
This theory is illustrated in the attached Diagram A which, in the words of the Declaration itself, does set out both programmatic actions, desired outcomes both intermediate (in improved aid effectiveness) and longer-term (in contributions to improved development results).

Making due allowance for the unusually high level of the intermediate outcomes desired (Core Question 2) and the exceptional complexity and diversity of the processes and relationships through which they would be generated (Core Question 1 – see Diagram B) the Declaration is quite explicit about the expected broad drivers of change, and specific pathways, so that the intended causal relationships to desired outcomes are reasonably clear.4 The Evaluation can also examine a number of hypothesized “mechanisms of change” to assess more precisely how the Paris Declaration (the program) may have contributed to the intended outcomes. For a number of reasons still, it will not be possible or even useful to try to attribute changes in a direct, linear way to the Declaration, but the systematic examination of evaluative evidence from a variety of settings can provide a basis for assessing its plausible contributions.

In terms of contributing to desired longer-term outcomes (in improved development results) the causal relationships are much less clear. In large part this is simply a function of the broader difficulty of

3 To remind, the classic definition of program theory is "a specification of what must be done to achieve the desired goals, what other important impacts may also be anticipated, and how these goals and impacts would be generated." Chen (1990)
4 Examination of the background to the Declaration also shows that this program theory also builds on the expected sources in the literature, i.e. “prior theory and research, implicit theories of those close to the program, observations of the program, and exploratory research to test critical assumptions.” Donaldson (2001)
attributing development results to aid programs, when the latter usually represent only a small share of the total resources and actions contributing to an overall result. This difficulty will have to be reflected in less ambitious claims to answering Evaluation Question 3 on Development Results. We must accept that the Evaluation will be dependent on other reliable evaluative evidence to identify contributions of aid to development results in particular contexts, and only then seek to trace possible plausible contributions back to the findings on improved aid effectiveness in Core Question 2.

At the end of the day, this Evaluation must evaluate the results of the PD “program” in contributing to improved aid effectiveness and possible plausible contributions to improved development results from aid, but also evaluate the program theory itself, with a view to possible recommendations on improving aid effectiveness beyond the Paris Declaration.
## Diagram A: The Skeletal Program Theory of the Paris Declaration (Wording taken directly from the Declaration text)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTENDED DRIVERS</th>
<th>PROGRAMMATIC INPUTS/ ACTIONS</th>
<th>PD OUTPUTS</th>
<th>INTENDED INTERMEDIATE (AID EFFECTIVENESS) OUTCOMES</th>
<th>INTENDED LONGER TERM (DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS) OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *Continued high-level political support* | *Agreed political commitment to change*<sup>2</sup> | 58 commitments | 1. *Stronger national strategies and operational frameworks*
| *Peer pressure* | *Backed by 58 Partnership commitments, progress measured against 12 specific indicators with targets for year 2010* | Deliverables relating to changes in working practice by; Partner Countries | 2. Increased alignment of aid with partner countries’ priorities, systems and procedures, help to strengthen capacities
| *Coordinated actions at the global, regional and country levels*<sup>1</sup> | *Initiatives by partner countries and donors to establish their own targets for improved aid effectiveness within the framework of the agreed Partnership Commitments and Indicators of Progress* | Donors | 3. Defined measures and standards of performance and accountability of partner country systems in public financial management, procurement, fiduciary standards and environmental assessments
|  |  | Donors & Partner countries | 4. Less duplication of efforts and rationalized, more cost-effective donor activities
|  |  |  | 5. Reforming and simplified donor policies and procedures, multi-year commitments on aid flows to committed partner countries
|  |  |  | 6. More predictable and multi-year commitments on aid flows to committed partner countries
|  |  |  | 7. Sufficient delegation of authority to donors’ field staff, and adequate attention to incentives for effective partnerships between donors and partner countries
|  |  |  | 8. Sufficient integration of global programmes and initiatives into partner countries’ broader development agencies
|  |  |  | 9. Stronger partner countries’ capacities to plan, manage and implement results-driven national strategies
|  |  |  | 10. Enhanced respective accountability of countries and donors to citizens and parliaments
|  |  |  | 11. Less corruption and more transparency, strengthening public support and supporting effective resource mobilisation and allocation<sup>3</sup>
|  |  |  |  | *Increase the impact of aid in:*
|  |  |  |  | 1. Reducing poverty
|  |  |  |  | 2. Reducing inequality
|  |  |  |  | 3. Increasing growth
|  |  |  |  | 4. Building capacity
|  |  |  |  | 5. Accelerating achievement of MDGs<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> We commit to accelerate the pace of change by implementing, in a spirit of mutual accountability, the Partnership Commitments presented in Section II and to measure progress against 12 specific indicators that we have agreed today and that are set out in Section III of this Declaration. As a further spur to progress, we will set targets for the year 2010. These targets, which will involve action by both donors and partner countries, are designed to track and encourage progress at the global level among the countries and agencies that have agreed to this Declaration.

<sup>2</sup> We reassert the commitments made at Rome to harmonise and align aid delivery. We are encouraged that many donors and partner countries are making aid effectiveness a high priority, and we reassert our commitment to accelerate progress in implementation, especially in the following areas... We commit ourselves to taking concrete and effective action to address the remaining challenges.

<sup>3</sup> We commit to accelerate the pace of change by implementing, in a spirit of mutual accountability, the Partnership Commitments presented in Section II and to measure progress against 12 specific indicators that we have agreed today and that are set out in Section III of this Declaration. As a further spur to progress, we will set targets for the year 2010. These targets, which will involve action by both donors and partner countries, are designed to track and encourage progress at the global level among the countries and agencies that have agreed to this Declaration.

---

18
Diagram B: The Context for Implementing the Paris Declaration - Complex pathways to change

Increase the impact of aid in:
1. Reducing poverty
2. Reducing inequality
3. Increasing growth
4. Building capacity
5. Accelerating achievement of MDGs'